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# CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION IN PAKISTAN

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CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BARRIERS IN  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION  
IN PAKISTAN

BY

ADELINA SYLAJ

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
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MASTER OF ARTS

OF

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2019

## **ABSTRACT**

Lack of effective communication among employees at an organization may lead to low work performance. This study, surveying and interviewing the employees of International Organization for Migration in Pakistan (IOM), was conducted to understand whether a preference for supportive management style and directive management style is a result of highly individualistic, highly masculine and low uncertainty avoidance societies; and whether such preference leads to a stronger perception of team cohesiveness. Fifty-two employees participated in the survey and six employees were interviewed. Correlation tests based on the survey data showed that preference for supportive management style was not significantly related to highly individualistic and low uncertainty avoidance societies. Correlation tests based on the survey data also showed that preference for directive management style was not significantly related to highly masculine societies. Interview results showed a trend that preference for supportive management style was related to individualistic culture societies but do not show a trend that preference for supportive management style was related to low uncertainty avoidance societies. Interview results also showed that preference for directive management style was not related to highly masculine societies. Previous studies have found that preferences for certain management styles, as a result of national cultural orientation, may lead to cross communication barriers. However, the results of this study did not show that to be a factor. These results should be interpreted with caution because of the small sample size.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

With global market integration multicultural societies have created conditions for international companies to carry business across the world and it is important to be aware of cross communication barriers. Often, the unfamiliarity or interest to learn customs, traditions, values or communication styles in countries of interest will decrease the opportunities for success or in extreme cases, local government will force international companies to leave.

International Organization for Migration, IOM, is the United Nations Migration Agency. The organization was established in 1951 as a result of World War II resettling 406,000 refugees, displaced persons and economic migrants from Europe (IOM, 1950). IOM has 169 member states, 8 observer states and 9,000 employees worldwide. Since the 1950s IOM has expanded its mission in 480 offices and sub-offices worldwide.

I worked for IOM's Pakistan Transition Initiatives, PTI, from 2013 to 2016. The primary goal of the program was to contribute to stabilization of Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, both bordering Afghanistan. PTI implements a stabilization program, aiming to do quick impact, short term projects in areas prone to violent extremism. Daily interactions included communicating with international staff from Australia, U.S., Europe and Africa, and mainly national male Pashtuns. Pashtuns, the ethnic majority of Pakistan, identify themselves as having a culture based on close family ties under a tribal code



where patriarchy and collectivism prevail (Marten et al, 2008). The culture is based on the *Pakhtunwali* society involving “chivalry or bravery, hospitality, gender boundaries, council, the right of a fugitive to seek refuge and acceptance of his offer of peace, the right of revenge, steadfastness, righteousness, and persistence” (Orakzai, 2001, p.37).

In daily communication with my international colleagues at IOM I noticed many of them lack cultural knowledge of local Pakistanis. Similarly, my national colleagues’ unawareness of certain behaviors of their international colleagues was a result of cultural differences influencing their behaviors and communication styles at work. Solomon and Schell (1985) state “there is a barrier to what should be universal recognition of the importance of learning culture: you don’t know you need it until you’ve had a problem or you’re facing something that you can’t understand” (p.2) and identify seven following steps in doing business with a global mindset: hierarchy and egalitarianism, group focus, relationships, communication styles, time orientation, change tolerance and motivation/work life balance. They argue, using the iceberg analogy, that culture has both visible and invisible layers. When we engage in communicating with other cultures most of us are aware of how people dress, what they say or do, the way they speak and how they treat one another, however the invisible culture related to one’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors takes longer time to understand and requires closer observation. According to Solomon and Schell core factors of hidden culture are “history, its heroes, stories passed on from generation to generation, and religious ideas and ideals” (p. 144). This study, surveying and interviewing the employees of International Organization for Migration in Pakistan

(IOM), aims to understand whether a preference for supportive management style and directive management style is a result of highly individualistic, highly masculine and low uncertainty avoidance societies; and whether such preference leads to a stronger perception of team cohesiveness. Hofstede (1980) states five dimensions of cultural differences impact communication and behaviors within an organization: long term orientation, power distance index, uncertainty avoidance index, collectivism/individualism, and masculinity.

Communication barriers derive as a result of national culture's influence considering individuals from different cultural backgrounds have different expectations at work and have different ways of behaving and thinking and as result prefer to apply either a supportive or directive management style. My study will measure whether a preference for supportive management style and directive management style is a result of national cultural orientation; and whether such preference leads to a stronger perception of team cohesiveness. Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall (1992) claim failure to operate in a global environment does not result from people lacking professional skills but it results from the inability to communicate effectively. While functional differences are to be expected, management styles, beliefs, and values of each culture are often ignored because individuals are much more focused in making money than spending the time to establish close relationships and learn about each other's cultural upbringing (Barnard, 1995). Being aware of these differences and establishing systems in place to improve behaviors and prevent communication barriers is why I consider this research study important, and my justification is multifold.

First, this study will contribute toward theoretical understanding of cross cultural communication and preferences for certain management styles, as a result of national cultural orientation, may lead to cross communication barriers. International organizations will find the data derived from this study as a valuable source of information as they explore new global business opportunities and results will serve as a reference point for future studies on this subject.

Second, few studies have been done on cross cultural communication barriers in Pakistan. Considering Pakistan neighbors Afghanistan, it plays a strategic position in maintaining stability in the region and a vast number of international organizations are interested to operate in the country. The findings of this research will assist them in understanding what challenges to be aware of when setting up operations in the country.

Third, no previous research on cross cultural communication at IOM exists. While organization hires cross cultural facilitators to assist refugees in resettlement programs, the organization and scholars have not conducted any research to identify cultural barriers, if any, existing at IOM as a whole. Although this study looks at only one out of 480 ongoing missions around the world, it will serve as a well-developed information guide for the senior management based in organization's headquarters to understand internal communication challenges where results show to be significant.

And fourth, study on cross cultural communication barriers at IOM Pakistan is lacking. Effective communication is imperative in organization's success and the results of this study will make them more aware of their team dynamics and whether

the organization needs to improve the way they communicate with one another in order to establish a good corporate culture.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Cross Cultural Communication**

It is important to define what cross cultural communication is, what it entails, and how we communicate using verbal and nonverbal communication. Hurn and Tomalin refer to cross cultural communication as “the way people from different cultures communicate when they deal with each other at a distance or face to face. Communication can involve spoken and written language, body language, and the language of etiquette and protocol” (2013, p. 192).

Language is defined as “a system of conceptual symbols that not only allows us to communicate but also provides the individual with a significant frame of reference and a relational context that sustain identification” (Imberti, p.67, 2007). IOM’s official languages are English, French and Spanish. In Pakistan, national employees are required to speak English. One of the challenges is finding national experts to perform the jobs required, particularly difficult in remote areas mainly due to their poor English skills. Additionally, the organization employs individuals across the globe and often times their primary language is not English either.

This concept of “cross-lingual” communication, occurring between individuals that do not have the same language in common, was discussed by Ruzzene (1998). She states when this takes place people leave out important details of the conversation either because they don’t know how to explain them or what could be communicated in a few words in their native language takes too long to explain in another language.

Inability to fully comprehend the official language used to communicate at a workplace causes stress, low self-esteem and poor performance.

Another aspect from communication's perspective lies in understanding the importance of nonverbal communication. According to De Hua and Hui (2007) in order to understand a culture we not only need to learn their language but observe closely their body movements, including facial gestures, proximity, body postures and paralinguistic. Many other scholars agree with De Hua and Hui's observation and claim 65% of our daily communication is done nonverbally (Guerrero & Floyd, 2006). We use nonverbal communication as an avenue to communicate emotions, have a harder time to control them and consider more credible than verbal communication, especially true in times of anger or stress when our behavior is instinctual. Being fluent in either local language or official language spoken at work (i.e. English at IOM) and understanding nonverbal cues are critical components of cross cultural communication.

### **Cross Cultural Communication and Organizational Effectiveness**

Cross cultural communication at a workplace is particularly important to be examined, as it is an important dependent variable of organization's effectiveness. This means having the need to establish an organizational culture where employees are able to successfully operate in culturally diverse teams and global workforce (Hopkins & Susanne, 2016) incorporating the strategies I discussed so far - active listening, comprehension of nonverbal behaviors, and use of language to the level of understanding between individuals not sharing the same language- and other cultural values that need to be clearly communicated. Organizational culture is defined as a structure "comprised of many intangible phenomena such as values, beliefs,

assumptions, perceptions, behavioral norms, artifacts, and patterns of behavior” (Shafritz et al., 2011, p. 338). Underlying notions of this definition are strengthening blocks because they explain ways employees approach their work, make decisions and deal with each other (Sankar, 1988).

The argument is that employees, regardless of their role in the company or cultural background, must be moral, ethical and possess values that can be aligned with the organization they work for. Employees need to communicate what kind of values they hold, mirror them through actions, and establish reward and management systems to reinforce those values because this level of consistency establishes conditions for respect, trust and willingness to work harder (Kerns, 2005).

Furthermore, researchers emphasize the need to enforce guiding principles of integrity, truthfulness and fairness in an organization related to accurate communication, authenticity, avoiding conflict of interest and situations that would discredit the organization they work for (Hopkins and Sussane, 2016).

Several researchers have emphasized the importance to examine further organization’s effectiveness through lenses of management styles in lieu with culture and communication differences especially in international settings where management challenges are greater and possibilities for cultures to hold contrary values in the same working environment are higher.

## **Management Styles and Team Cohesiveness**

Management models are differentiated into two- supportive and directive management styles used within an organization (Northouse, 2004). Supportive management style is characterized with putting time and efforts into developing interpersonal relationship, spending the time to know each coworker/subordinate and understand their cultural upbringing. This type of management is concerned with team's wellbeing creating an environment where teams/subordinates feel empowered and collaborate well with one another (Chen et al, 2002). Additionally, it encourages team involvement into decision making process where employee's efforts to achieve goals, suggest ideas and suggestions are taken widely into account (Greenfield, 2004). Directive management style is characterized with being task oriented spending little to no time in developing relationships. Managers exercising this style expect subordinates to obey by the rules of the organizations with strong emphasis in following standard procedures for the task at hand and apply close supervision of subordinates in the organization (Schmit & Yeh, 1992).

Several studies have examined cultural differences and concluded these differences affect the relationship between supportive and directive style with team cohesiveness. The way a manager communicates plays a large role in establishing strong or weak teams and team's willingness and unwillingness to work as a group in an organization. Directive management seeks a tight control of work environment and close supervision leading to dissatisfaction among workers, low productivity, conflict and weaker team cohesiveness as working together to achieve organization's goals is discouraged (Paine & Organ, 2000). Managers with supportive style establishing conditions where there is loyalty, initiative and hard work create a culture where



employees are not afraid to share their ideas, develop strong teamwork and being offered opportunities for growth and skill development trainings (Devi, 2009). In return, these behaviors are a strong predictor of cohesive relations between team members and increase of productivity within an organization.

Aside from cross cultural communication many other researchers have studied closely the dimensions of national culture developed by Gert Hofstede. In this study I will examine the effects of cultural differences contributing to communication barriers in relation to management styles and team work. Hofstede (2001) identifies five national dimensions- long term orientation, power distribution index, individualism versus collectivism; uncertainty avoidance index, and low versus high masculinity. Cultural differences relevant to this study are the last three.

### **Individualism versus Collectivism**

In individualistic societies individuals center themselves and immediate family members as the most important ones while developing loose relationships with others. In collectivistic societies individuals are born into and spend their whole lives integrating themselves into tied groups with others (Hofstede, 1997). Tensions may arise when individuals from these two opposite dimensions work together. Specifically, managers may create barriers and ineffective communication behaviors based from the way they appraise, shame, and embarrass their national colleagues as well as skills they use to negotiate business deals or decisions making (Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Communication in both contexts is directly related to the cultural values, norms and beliefs of individuals. Scholars of face negotiation theory examine members of individualistic society base their communication on their feelings and are more motivated to talk while members of collectivistic societies avoid hurting others and dislike imposing themselves onto others to achieve their goals (Kim, 1994). Moreover, individualistic cultures emphasize being clear and direct when communicating with specific requests to accomplish tasks much more than collectivists societies (Kim & Wilson, 1994).

Scholars offer an in depth analysis of how communication styles take place in both cultural contexts. It is argued societies that value individualistic perspectives like to confront challenges and address conflict directly with low concern for saving face and high expression of emotions while individuals valuing collectivistic goals use the opposite communication style, with a high presence of diplomacy and politeness, hiding real emotions (Levine, 1985). Researchers have further looked at how communication style differences between individualistic and collectivistic societies may inflate conflict through face-work theoretical framework.

In 1978 Brown and Levinson, and later re-emphasized by Stella Ting-Toomey, stated that all “people in all cultures try to maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations; the concept of “face” is especially problematic in uncertain situations (e.g., conflict situations) when the situated identities of the communicators are called into question; cultural variability, individual-level variables, and situational variables influence cultural members’ selection of face concerns over others, and subsequently, cultural variability, individual-level variables, and situational variables

influence the use of various face-work and conflict strategies in intergroup and interpersonal encounters” (Oetzel et al., 2010, p. 238).

Others have looked at how face theoretical framework applies in culture and how individuals from opposite structures handle conflict while at the same time save face. It is stated that individuals save face two ways, *lian* “involving moral character, social obligations, and ethicality” and *mianzi* “involving prestige, status and social recognition” (Early, 1997, p.80).

Research has shown high concern for losing *mianzi* is more a characteristic of collectivistic societies (Bond & Hwang). With the society deeply divided in two classes and based from conversations I had with Pakistani nationals, the society in general, and elite class in particular, status and prestige are extremely important values. For example, IOM’s employees with a military background were always formally addressed by their title and last names. Additionally, in my years in the country, I have encountered managers from individualistic cultures inflicting conflict with their national colleagues coming from high elite class with strong social ties due to poor performance causing frustration and as an assertive decision maker it was difficult for the manager to accept their work ethics.

Research has provided evidence that management styles of individuals from individualistic societies are fairly decentralized applying more participatory and consultative approach to decision making. Contrary to individualistic societies, managers from collectivistic societies apply a greater authoritarian and centralized system (Pavet & Morris, 1995). There have been scholars claiming the preference for authoritarian style at workplace in collectivistic societies may happen due to the

influence of political systems within their culture where governments and institutions perform authority patterns corresponding with the authority patterns of the society (Eckstein, 1997).

For this reasons scholars claim that Pakistan, known to be a power and status differentiated society, applies higher characteristics of directive management style, mostly shaped from the history of being under military rules for long periods of time. Although country's constitution today is guided by basic democracy and has introduced economic reforms and privatization, government remains under the leadership of individuals with either a military background or indirectly influenced and pressured from the military in leading the country (Kirkman and Shapiro, 1999). A similar value system is reflected in their national organizations where decision making is located at the top with limited employee autonomy (Khilji, 2001).

International organizations, such as IOM, implementing programs internationally are influenced by the culture of host country facing many communication challenges and recognizing these differences, in order to avoid conflict and maintain good face, is important as they affect team cohesiveness and company's productivity. Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis:

H1: High individualistic oriented individuals prefer supportive management style, which leads to a strong perception of team cohesiveness.

## **Masculinity**

This dimension of national culture focuses on the communication behaviors and negotiation skills in cultural terms and the level of importance a society puts on nurture. High masculinity culture refers to the societies embracing the competitive, assertive and ambitious decision making styles at a workplace while low masculinity culture focuses in establishing stronger social systems and quality of life, such as what can be observed in Scandinavian countries (Usunier & Lee, 2005). Newman and Nollen, using Hofstede's national culture dimensions, examined the correlation of Asian and European management practices with the national culture. They concluded that "high masculine cultures value achievement and abhor failure while low masculinity cultures value affiliation and view failure as much less important" (1996, p.758). Additionally, respect for power and materialism is a priority for individuals of the high masculinity and value for the welfare and consensus for individuals of low masculinity culture prevails (Hofstede, 1997).

Bjorn Bjerke is another researcher that has analyzed how low and high masculine cultures affect communication at a workplace. He stresses cultures incorporating low masculinity work to live and need to create a social circle at work emphasizing relationships over tasks as important. On the contrary individuals from cultures with high masculinity live to work, they are task oriented and see monetary gain as a great indicator of one's success (Bjerke, 1999).

When dimensions of low and high masculinity culture merge it may largely affect company's culture and communication two ways. First is stress factor. Stress can serve as a motivator toward productivity however the situation can have a negative impact if the focus is only on productivity not considering working conditions, long

hours or unclear job descriptions (Draper, 2006). Second is gender equality factor. Male dominated organizations with little to no equal distribution in wages or promotions create a gender gap alienating the female employees. For this reason, I put forward the following hypothesis:

H2: High masculine oriented individuals prefer directive management styles, which leads to a perception of strong team cohesiveness.

### **Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)**

UAI dimension of the national culture focuses on “the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertainty and ambiguity and try to avoid these situations” (De Mooij and Hofstede 2010, pg. 8). Countries with high UAI need structure, formalities to structure their life. Its individuals like to avoid ambiguity and feel uncomfortable when behaving or taking actions without following strict rules, comfort to their social rules, family and that of their friends. On the contrary, countries with low UAI (i.e. the U.S) are considered to be risk takers, with a greater tolerance for ideas and autonomy where organizational structures are more flexible (Rodriguez & Kaplan, 1998).

UN in general and IOM in particular, is a complex organization with extensive regulations, operational systems with multiple approval steps where projects are carefully planned. Pakistan in particular is intolerant to unconventional ideas, and respects rigid codes for rules and authority. In combination these two factors may create a dramatic tension between the organization/country of operation and employees coming from countries with low UAI. With the attitude of low uncertainty these individuals are more open to innovation and “thinking outside of the box” with a preference in flexible rules and deadlines, and a willingness to take risks aiming to

fight the traditional way of doing things, expanding operations and implementing new programs. Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Low uncertainty avoidance oriented individuals prefer supportive management styles, which leads to a strong perception of team cohesiveness.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### *Survey*

#### *Participants*

143 employees working at IOM in Pakistan were invited to participate.

Currently, 66% of the organization's employees are male and 34% female, with the majority of individuals 30-50 years old. The organization's structure is hierarchical with five lines of communication and authority including IOM's country director, 8 program managers, 3 field team leaders and 131 individuals from program, human resources, M&E, logistics & procurement, and finance departments. The majority of the IOM staff is based in Islamabad with others mainly in Peshawar and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of the country. I administered the survey online so I had no direct contact with participants.

36% of the employees working at IOM Pakistan responded to the survey, a total of 52 participants. Results showed that 63.7% of respondents were male and 32.7% were female. A total of 1.9%, the smallest group, were under 25 years old, followed by 17 respondents (32.7%) age 25-34, 29 respondents (55.8%) age 35-44, and 5 (9.6%) age 45-54.



<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	35	67.3	67.3	67.3
Female	17	32.7	32.7	100
<b>Age (yrs)</b>				
20-24	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
25-34	17	32.7	32.7	34.6
35-44	29	55.8	55.8	90.4
45-54	5	9.6	9.6	100

Twenty people (38.5%) from the Operations Department responded to the survey- the highest response rate from all the departments. I expected similar results as this department hires the highest number of people, mainly responsible for program implementation in field offices. The second highest response rate (17.3%) was from the Department of Monitoring and Evaluation, followed by the Department of Logistics and Procurement with a response rate of 15.4%.

<b>Department</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Human Resources		9	17.3	17.3
Finance		6	11.5	28.8
Programs		20	38.5	67.3
Logistics and Procurement		8	15.4	82.7
Monitoring and Evaluation		9	17.3	100

In terms of ethnicity, as expected, the majority of respondents were Asian (65.4%) followed by European (11.5%), and 9.6 % were African.

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
European	6	11.5	11.5
American	4	7.7	7.7
Australian	3	5.8	5.8
Asian	34	65.4	65.4
African	5	9.6	9.6

### *Procedure*

Once the IRB approval was received, I sent a recruitment letter to IOM's Country Director in Pakistan explaining the purpose of the research. Once the agreement to participate in the study was received, I submitted the questionnaire using IOM's general staff email address reaching out to 143 employees at once. Participants were given three weeks to respond to the questions and the responses were tracked during this time. Participants were asked to fill out the survey questionnaire on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com).

### *Measures*

**Individualism and Collectivism.** I measured individualism and collectivism by using the 27-item Culture Orientation Scale (Singelis et al, 2005). The scale, validated by previous studies, is designed to measure individualistic and collectivistic cultures from four dimensions: horizontal collectivism, vertical collectivism, horizontal individualism and vertical individualism. Horizontal collectivism is defined as a culture where individuals see themselves as part of a collective society and everyone is equal. Vertical collectivism is a culture where people see themselves as part of a collective society that accepts inequalities. Vertical individualism is a culture where self is fully independent, accepting inequality in an individualistic society. Horizontal individualism is a culture where people see themselves fully independent and emphasize equality between individuals.

I adapted the culture orientation scale to my study, and for individualism I asked participants about their working style and value for success with statements such as "I depend on myself rather than others to complete a task," and "When another employee does better, I get tensed". Items for collectivism asked participants to rate

statements such as “One should pursue a goal after considering the welfare of the group,” and “One should sacrifice self-interest of the group” Respondents rated these statements on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). For collectivism, the negatively worded items such as “Individual success is more important” and “I prefer to work alone” were reverse coded. The scales were reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  .657 for individualism and Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  .686 for collectivism). Each participant’s individualism score was calculated by averaging each participant’s scores across the items of the individualism scale. The same was done for collectivism.

**Uncertainty Avoidance and Masculinity.** The two variables were measured based on the 27-item Cultural Values Scale. Uncertainty avoidance refers to respect for rules and regulations, need for predictability, and desire for the reduction of ambiguity and risk. I adapted the scale of uncertainty avoidance from the CVS scale and asked participants to rate statements such as “Standardized work procedures are helpful,” and “Rules and regulations are important because I know what it is expected of me” on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale was reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  = .694).

The scale of masculinity measures the extent to which people perceive men and women to be as equal in terms of social roles, capabilities, rights and responsibilities. Using the same Likert scale, as for other variables, participants were asked to rate statements such as “It is much more important for men to have a career than it is for women” and “Men usually solve problems with logical analysis while women do it with intuition”. The scale was reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  = .699).

**Perception of Team Cohesiveness.** The dependent variable was measured from a previously validated Team Cohesiveness Evaluation scale (Veraaraghavan et al, 1996), which measures commitment, accountability and appreciation. Using a 5 point Likert scale participants rated the statements like “Team members should share decision making and accept feedback from each other” and “Team members should have genuine appreciation for one another”. The scale was tested and found reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .739$ ).

**Preference for Supportive Management.** This dependent variable was measured by items regarding support for teams and their wellbeing, establishing close relationships and supporting teams in career growth (Litwin & Singer, 1968). I tested the instrument’s reliability and it was low (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .358$ ). I then analyzed the scale using an explanatory principle factor analysis to determine what items and which factors to retain. Varimax rotation was conducted in the factor analysis and results showed three strong factors with Eigenvalues over 1.00, which together explain 65% of total variability in the data. For the purpose of this thesis research, I picked question 3 “employee’s encouragement to talk about his/her personal problems with their manager” and question 5 “managers should allow for decisions to be challenged by their teams” both of which were loaded on the same factor with factor loadings of .771 and .892, respectively. Although the scale’s reliability with questions 3 and 5 was still low (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .502$ ), it is important to keep these two questions as they are closely related to my study. Using the first question, I wanted to understand the manager's management style in relation to their employees. Specifically, how supportive they are, their level of concern for employees’ wellbeing and their

emphasis on creating a harmonic atmosphere at work. Using the second question, I wanted to understand the level of confidence these managers have in facilitating discussions and stimulating employees to give input in decision-making. Showing support while encouraging bottom-up communication makes employees feel they are part of the process and allows for full talent to be used, in turn raising morale and productivity (Wester & Weiss, 1991).

**Preference for Directive Management style.** This dependent variable, measured three things: level of tendency to control discussions, direct task completion and close attention to details. Using a 5-point Likert scale I asked participants questions such as “Employees are expected to follow instructions,” and “Managers should make most decisions without consulting subordinates”. The scale was tested and found reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .691$ ).

## **Interviews**

### *Participants*

Six managers from senior and middle management, based in Islamabad, were interviewed in order to further understand the issues under examination. I administered interviews online so I had no direct contact with participants.

### *Procedure*

Interviews, carried through Skype, consisted of eleven structured questions formulated based on previous theoretical literature and questionnaires on management style, team cohesiveness and individualism (versus collectivism), uncertainty avoidance and masculinity (versus femininity).

Participants were asked to describe their management style, the level of confidence and trust they have in their teams and the level of effort they put on satisfying employee's needs and wants. Participants were also asked if they see themselves as risk takers and how important it is to them to create a work culture that focuses on group relations.

Once the IRB approval was received, I sent an introduction/recruitment letter to managers at IOM Pakistan explaining the purpose of the research. Once the agreement to participate in the study was received, I set up online interviews. Interviews were conducted in areas free from distractions and at times and locations suitable for participants.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### *Survey*

In Table 1 it can be observed that supportive management is preferred over directive management and employees at IOM apply more characteristics of collectivistic and uncertainty avoidance societies.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables**

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Preferred supportive management	3.26	0.92
Preferred directive management	3.11	0.69
Perception of team cohesiveness	4.32	0.58
Individualism	2.62	1.57
Collectivism	3.55	0.64
Uncertainty Avoidance	4.32	1.18
Masculinity	2.41	0.9

In terms of Ethnicity, in Table 2 it can be observed that supportive management is preferred over directive management for ethnicities working at IOM, with Asian and African applying more characteristics of collectivistic, that of individualism by Westerns.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables by Ethnicity**

Variables	Western	Asian	African
Preferred supportive management	3.88 (0.84)	3.55 (0.98)	4.21 (0.41)
Preferred directive management	2.66 (0.33)	3.33 (0.71)	3.98 (1.12)
Perception of team cohesiveness	4.69 (1.22)	4.41 (1.42)	3.55 (0.33)
Individualism	3.33 (1.66)	2.37 (1.25)	3.04 (1.39)
Collectivism	2.44 (0.57)	3.67 (0.53)	4.26 (0.61)
Uncertainty Avoidance	4.10 (0.90)	3.54 (1.48)	4.77 (0.59)
Masculinity	2.02 (0.66)	2.76 (0.16)	3.16 (0.8)

Note: *SD* values in parenthesis

## Test of Hypotheses

To test the hypotheses, the bivariate Pearson Correlation was used for this study. Using this method, I was able to see whether there is statistical evidence for an either positive or negative relationship among independent and dependent variables and whether that relationship is strong. Under the first hypothesis, I assumed a positive relationship between individualistic culture and their preference for supportive management style, and that a preferred supportive management style has a positive impact on perception of team cohesiveness. Table 3 shows the results of the analysis. Individualism and supportive management style are positively related ( $r = .081$ ) however the correlation between these two variables is not statistically significant ( $p = .567$ ). Additionally, results show a positive relationship between preference for supporting management style and strong perception of team cohesiveness ( $r = .233$ ); nevertheless, the correlation is statistically insignificant ( $p = .092$ ). In conclusion, H1 does not hold statistically.

**Table 3. Correlations Between Variables for Hypothesis 1**

Variables	1	2	3
1. Preferred supportive management	1	0.081	0.233
2. Individualism	0.081	1	-0.114
3. Perception of team cohesiveness	0.233	-0.114	1

The second hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between high masculinity-oriented individuals and their preferred use of directive management style, and that a preferred directive management style has a positive impact on



perception of team cohesiveness. Table 4 shows the results. Directive management is positively related to masculinity ( $r = 0.232$ ) but not at a significant level ( $p = .095$ ).

Preference for directive management leads to the perception of strong team cohesiveness, although positively related ( $r = 0.004$ ), it is not statistically significant ( $p = .980$ ). Therefore, H2 is rejected.

**Table 4. Correlations Between Variables for Hypothesis 2**

Variables	1	2	3
1. Preferred directive management	1	0.004	0.232
2. Perception of team cohesiveness	0.004	1	-0.173
3. Masculinity	0.232	-0.173	1

My final hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between low uncertainty-avoidance individuals and their preference for supportive management styles, and that a preferred supportive management style has a positive impact on perception of team cohesiveness. Table 5 shows the relationship is positive ( $r = .046$ ) but not significant ( $p = .748$ ) and their perception of team cohesiveness is negatively related to preference of supportive management ( $r = -0.096$ ) but not at a significance level ( $p = .499$ ). Thus there is no support for H3.

**Table 5. Correlations Between Variables for Hypothesis 3**

Variables	1	2	3
1. Preferred supportive management	1	0.046	0.233
2. Uncertainty Avoidance	0.046	1	-0.096
3. Perception of team cohesiveness	0.233	-0.096	1

## **Interviews**

### *Structure of the interview*

Eight individuals in managerial positions working for IOM Pakistan were contacted. Six managers agreed to take part in the study and were interviewed through Skype. Information gathered through interviews helped me understand in more detail the reasoning behind the results presented above.

### *Interview Results*

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between highly individualistic culture and their preference for supportive management style, leading to perception of team cohesiveness. Results show a trend that preference for supportive management is positively related with individualistic culture which was what literature review had predicted. Previous research stated that supportive management style is fairly decentralized with participatory and consultative approach to decision making, applied mainly by individualistic societies (Pavet & Morris, 1995).

My study found that being flexible, taking care of employees and giving more autonomy to complete their own tasks increases employee's wellbeing and productivity. For example, one of the individuals adjusts her management style

to meet the needs of the people she's managing because she believes a good manager gives clear directions and is always ready and available to jump in to offer guidance, expertise, and help when needed.

Findings also show that it is important to develop interpersonal relationship by taking the time to check in with teams frequently and trusting their judgments to deliver tasks well. For example, one of the individuals describes his style as a philosophy and policy--open door policy where anyone can walk into his office at any time to discuss any issue, and a philosophy that staff know how to do their jobs, don't need a lot of oversight, and are generally treated as professionals until proven otherwise.

The second hypothesis predicted that highly masculine societies prefer directive management styles, leading to perception of strong team cohesiveness. The finding was opposite of what literature review had suggested because preference was higher for supportive management style. Previous research found that respect for power and materialism is a priority for individuals of highly masculine culture (Hofstede, 1997). Literature also stated that highly masculine culture and directive management style have a low concern for relationships, and high concern for success and achievement (Kanter & Corn, 1994). Contrary to literature review, in my findings it was argued that teams should be involved in decision making, employees should be kept happy with working conditions and equality needs to be promoted. For example, as one individual explained, a supervisor's responsibility is to have conversations with staff regarding overall comfort level with certain tasks and responsibilities, profession interests, and goals. According to her, if an employee is not satisfied it is usually based

on fair reasons and steps should be taken to address their concerns. Giving regular feedback, particularly when they do good things, is key because the expectation is that noticing and rewarding good behavior will lead to more of it.

Literature stated that in highly masculine cultures senior positions are predominantly held by men and low concern is given for gender equality (Draper, 2006). Findings of this study did not support those predictions. A plausible explanation was made by an individual sharing her own experience in particular, as she had worked in several conservative environments where women are often underrepresented at the workplace. In her current senior level at IOM she now ensures all female staff feel empowered and safe to voice their opinions and concerns and will not be overshadowed by more assertive or aggressive (usually male) colleagues. She also pays particular attention to ensuring female staff's professional development and growth through accretion of duties, growing them into leadership roles.

The last hypothesis predicted that low uncertainty oriented individuals prefer supportive management styles, leading to perception of strong team cohesiveness. Results rejected this hypothesis because results showed preference to use directive management style is higher and none of the individuals interviewed considered themselves to be risk takers when it comes to rules in the organization. Considering IOM is a complex organization with hierarchy, global policies and regulations, and Pakistan in particular is intolerant to unconventional ideas following rigid codes for rules and authority, they don't like taking risks especially while implementing multimillion budget programs.

In particular individuals showed skepticism over taking risks for the sake of keeping harmony in the organization, mostly due to experience they had to endure working in international settings. Their preference to be more risk-averse and analyze a situation cautiously before making a decision makes them feel safer because on the flipside too much autonomy or no structure encourages weak work ethic or lack of accountability.

## **Discussion**

Using IOM Pakistan, this study examined preferences of highly individualistic, highly masculine and low uncertainty avoidance societies for supportive and directive management style, leading to perception of strong team cohesiveness. I aimed to measure consistency, if any, with literature and previous studies conducted on cultural orientations and their preference for certain management styles, identified as factors leading to cross cultural communication barriers.

Presumption of the first hypothesis was that highly individualistic individuals prefer supportive management style, which leads to a perception of strong team cohesiveness. In other words, the relationship between individualistic cultural orientations—that literature identifies to be individuals from Western Europe, the U.S. and Australia—and their preference to use supportive management as a perception of strong cohesiveness is strong. Trends show a positive relationship but not proven to be statistically significant. As such, findings were inconsistent with literature (Early, 1997; Pavet & Morris, 1995) suggesting that preference for supportive management is a trait used more by an individualistic cultural orientation than other orientations.

The argument researchers make about Westerners preferring direct communication styles, with no place for ambiguity (Brew & Cairns, 2004) was not shown in my findings. Instead individuals prefer higher use for indirect communication especially when it comes to disciplinary measures or enforcing rules.

Additionally, previous analysis based on the premise that political systems influence culture at a workplace is not emphasized in my findings. As the cultural value at the individual level, there is no evidence provided that collectivism enhances

authoritarian style at workplace as a result of a political influence, identified as a possible component in the existing literature.

Following Hofstede's national culture dimensions, scholars conclude that high masculine cultures value achievement and abhor failure (BaNewman and Nollen, 1996). Others stress that directive management is used by high masculine individuals in order to seek tight control of environment and close supervision (Paine and Organ, 2000). Contrary to what literature predicted based from my findings preference for a management style does not vary between low and high masculine cultural orientations. Individuals from high masculine cultures apply just the same supportive behaviors as individuals from low masculine cultures creating a work culture where employees feel valued.

Last hypothesis predicted whether low uncertainty-avoidance-oriented individuals—in favor of innovation and autonomy—prefer supportive management styles, leading to a strong perception of team cohesiveness. Findings demonstrated individuals prefer no ambiguity when it comes to regulations and policies. Literature also argues willingness for flexibility, autonomy and “thinking outside of the box” (Rodriguez & Kaplan, 1998) establishes conditions for low uncertainty avoidance societies to prefer a supportive management style. In my study, preference to use a directive management style is higher. One possible reason could be because of the organization. IOM, being a UN's migration agency, applies complex structures regulations where decision making is centralized following consistent worldwide policies and procedures.

The current study has two implications for IOM which should lead to reforms. First, productivity in an organization largely depends on day to day management and instead of preferring one management style individuals should consider the circumstances, host country and the environment they work in, adjusting their style based from the situation on the ground. I believe IOM senior management needs to assist individuals to successfully adapt in multicultural environments by providing funds for in-depth cultural trainings for employees before and during the course of employment with the organization. IOM should also consider applying a more decentralized system of decision making allowing field offices to make decisions at the country or mission level. Currently, the organization is largely controlled by its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, possibly causing delays and frustration among field staff.

Nevertheless, the overall results of this research provide an indication that employees at IOM apply effective cross cultural communication at workplace, regardless of their role in the organization. Their management styles are strongly related to work ethic, clear and open communication, cooperative behavior and a commitment not only to individual but organization's success as well.

An inconsistency between my findings and literature is that in the decades of research done on cultural diversity vis-a-vis organizational success it was concluded that advanced economies have a better understanding of the impact that culturally diverse values have on organizational effectiveness (De Abreu Dos Reis et al., 2007). My findings examining an organization implementing a program in Pakistan, known as a less advanced economy, with a cultural composition of their workforce from



developed and developing countries concludes they have just the same sufficient awareness of what literature proposes important culture-related factors that will impact organization's effectiveness.

### **Limitations**

Despite the findings, there are several limitations in this study. First, it is the sample. Although it is possible to interpret results using the sample I have, it is not ideal as only 52 out of 143 employees participated in the survey after rounds of solicitation and they may not represent the entire population (i.e., IOM in Pakistan). Second, this study looked at only one organization and data obtained do not represent all cultures. Results may be different if a larger number of organizations or countries are studied. Third, although the representation of nationalities at IOM is considered to be diverse considering this organization employs individuals from 131 countries worldwide, the mission in Pakistan is relatively small. And fourth, since this program operates in Pakistan it is expected to employ higher numbers of national Pakistanis.

As mentioned before, this study is based on only one organization. Further studies need to collect in-depth data from more than one IOM missions that may provide a finer explanation and paint different results. It may also be interesting to conduct longitudinal studies from the time individuals join the organization to years spent with IOM to see whether their beliefs, values and behaviors change over time. The majority of individuals working with IOM choose this as their permanent carrier moving from one location to another in a period of 20-30 years. Over the years they may be influenced by cultures of hosting countries and simply change their way of thinking. And lastly, this study examined an organization that explicitly focuses on maintaining international peace and security through various economic, political, human right and

cultural programs they implement worldwide. It would be helpful to see further research examining highly profitable, global corporations and see what kind of results they present.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

This study examined preferences of highly individualistic, highly masculine and low uncertainty avoidance societies to use supportive and directive management style, leading to perception of strong team cohesiveness. Supportive management style is characterized with putting time and efforts into developing interpersonal relationship, spending the time to know each coworker/subordinate and understand their cultural upbringing. Directive management style is known to be task oriented spending little to no time in developing relationships.

Results conclude that researchers cannot simply assume that individualism, masculinity or uncertainty avoidance cultural orientations explicitly result in an individual's preference to communicate or behave in certain way because of the cultural values they have. Moreover, perceptions of strong team cohesiveness should not be considered as an inherent part of the national culture and management style. And lastly, the study does not support the assumption that cross cultural communication barriers occur due to cultural differences or individuals' preference to use a certain management style.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A- Survey questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. In the following part of the questionnaire you will find 37 questions concerning intercultural communication and how you deal with them. Please note there are no correct or wrong answers, I am only interested in your personal opinion.

Please note that it is unnecessary to provide your name. Your answers which will be anonymously evaluated are purely used for academic purposes and will be treated strictly confidential.

For the statements below, please indicate the level of agreement with each question:

5 = strongly agree  
4 = agree  
3 = neither agree nor disagree  
2 = disagree  
1 = strongly disagree

1. Individual success is more important.
2. I prefer to work alone.
3. When another employee does better I get tensed.
4. I depend on myself rather than other to complete a task.
5. It is my duty to work harder even if my personality is suffering.
6. One should sacrifice self-interest of the group.
7. Group success is more important than individual success.
8. One should pursue a goal after considering the welfare of the group.
9. It is much more important for men to have a career than it is for women.
10. Men usually solve problems with logical analysis while women do it with intuition.

11. There are some jobs that men can do better than women.
12. Standardized work procedures are helpful.
13. Rules and regulations are important because I know what is expected of me.
14. Employees should follow instructions.
15. Team members should share decision making and accept feedback from each other.
16. Team members should recognize and appreciate complementary role functions.
17. Employees should be encouraged to talk about his/her personal problems.
18. Employees should disagree with management decisions. Employees are expected to follow instructions.
19. Employees are expected to submit detailed reports.
20. Employees should be supervised closely.
21. Manager should make most of the decisions without consulting subordinates.
22. It is frequently necessary for a manager to use authority and power.
23. Employees should seldom be asked for opinions.

**Finally, please answer the following general questions as accurately as you can:**

- A. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Gender: Male\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_
- C. Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Department you work in at IOM Pakistan: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B- Interview questions**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. This interview is mainly going to cover management style, and communication style within the organization.

The information required is purely for academic purpose and will be treated in strict confidence. Names will not, under any circumstance, appear in the final report.

1. How would you describe in your own words your management style?
2. How much focus do you put on satisfying employee's needs and wants? And if the focus is high how much guidance do you provide with regards to complete a task?
3. How much emphasis do you put on structuring the employees' tasks? Do you tell them how to do and when to do a certain task or you simply trust them?
4. How much emphasis do you put into creating a work culture that focused on group relations and wellbeing employees?
5. How important it is for you to establish close relationship versus accomplishing a task on time?
6. How direct and forthright are you when you communicate with your employees?
7. How often and what methods do you apply to appraise your employees?
8. Do you consider yourself to be a risk taker?
9. Do you prefer flexible rules within an organization or are you more comfortable to work under strict rules and policies being applied in the organization?
10. How do you ensure there is gender equality in the organization?
11. How do you ensure your employees are satisfied with the working conditions and their job descriptions?

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